

Conrad Buerger

Article Review I

Podcast Review of 'The Silver Bullet'

Episode 68 – Interview with John Steven

Dr. Walter Schilling

December 11th. 2011

This review is about 'The Silver Bullet', a podcast, which interviewed with John Steven. The podcast can be found on cigital.com. During this interview John talks about finding bugs and how there are different types of bugs. Another interesting topic that was brought up was dealing with the problems associated with security tools that large corporations use to monitor and enhance security. To conclude the podcast, they talk about mixology (of drinks).

One section of the podcast talks about how bugs are found whether and how they can be prevented. They talk about how even before the code is written; there can be bugs that can be prevented from just changing the architecture of the software. By simply changing the order of the parts of the architecture that make up the software design, one can avoid very common bugs that can break a system.

Another topic that was brought up during the podcast was about looking to find ways to find bugs before they come up when testing the code, or in the worst case, when the code is already out in the field. What people want now, is to have the ability to predict the bugs that will occur before they occur, like seeing into the future in a sense. This topic is important to bring up because we can alleviate the bugs before they come up instead of playing 'whack a mole' when the bugs surface and have to be taken care of.

Another topic of interest that was talked about was what are the biggest pitfalls to using static analyzers to identify bugs for large corporations. The big problem that Steve brings up is the problem on how to choose the right tool to use. Steve suggests the best way to do this is to find limits of the tool and mitigate those concerns immediately in the code instead of trying to figure out which one to buy. He says this because people can take the initiative to preparing the code before actually purchasing the product. This way, the code is prepared when the tool arrives instead of fixing the code when the new tool is put in place. Other problems associated with these tools are the lack of speed and high difficulty

with putting the applications that the corporation has into the security tool. Steve claims it can take weeks to get applications into these tools and some corporations have thousands of applications that need to be put into these security tools.

In the last minutes of the podcast, they throw in a fun question for Steve which asks him what his favorite drink is. We learn that it is the 'old fashioned', but he states that it's the old 'old fashioned'. He goes on to list the ingredients, but they are hard to comprehend since they are said in such a rushed manner. So, I took the liberty to find another source of what goes into this drink (Wikipedia). It consists of 12 parts American whiskey, one part simple syrup, one to three dashes of Angostura bitters, and a twist of lemon peel over the top and a maraschino cherry. Steve also goes on to say that there are various other fruit peels that can be used to experiment with, such as an orange peel to replace the lemon peel.

In this security podcast, some topics that were brought up were how to eliminate bugs before code is even written, different ways of finding bugs in the field when code has already been made, the disadvantages of security tools that large corporations use to monitor their software, and the mixology of drinks. Overall, it was a fairly informative podcast, and helped enhance my knowledge of security.